the Turk was at the gates of Vienna; for the repentance of Margaret; for the settlement of a strike; for a son for a barren woman; for Captain So and So wounded and prisoner of war; while the lions roared in the nearby amphitheatre; on the beach at Dunkirk; while the hiss of scythes in the thick June grass came faintly through the windows of the church; tremulously, by an old monk on the fiftieth anniversary of his vows; furtively, by an exiled bishop who had hewn timber all day in a prison camp near Murmansk; gorgeously, for the canonisation of S. Joan of Arc;--one could fill many pages with the reasons why men have done this, and not tell a hundredth part of them. And best of all, week by week and month by month, on a hundred thousand successive Sundays, faithfully, unfailingly, across all the parishes of Christendom, the pastors have done this just to make the plebs sancta Dei--the holy common people of God.

To those who know a little of Christian history, probably the most moving of all the reflections it brings is not the thought of the great events and the well-remembered saints, but of those innumerable millins of entirely obscure faithful men and women, every one with his or her own individual hopes and fears and joys and sorrows and loves--and sins and temptations and prayers--once every whit as vivid and alive as mine are now. They have left no slightest trace in this world, not even a name, but have passed to God utterly forgotten by men. Yet each of them once believed and prayed as I believe and pray, and found it hard and grew slack and sinned and repented and fell again. Each of them worshipped at the eucharist and found their thoughts wandering and tried again, and felt heavy and unresponsive and yet knew--just as really and pathetically as I do these things... The sheer stupendous quanitty of the love of God which this ever repeated action has drawn from the obscure Christian multitudes through the centuries is in itself an overwhelming thought. (All that going with

That is to say, in making his self revelation specific ~~his~~ ~~s~~ and exclusive God made human unity possible. In finding him men would have to find each other. In communing with him, men would have to commune together. This evening we celebrate the Last Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we are reenacting the ritual that has for 20 centuries been the sign and seal of Christiani unity--and the potential unity of all men. As we commune this evening, let us remember his prayer at that first communion; let us recall vividly that his deepest concern was that in finding him we might find each ~~B~~other and ~~our~~ lost unity. For this cause--he died.

I conclude by reading from the ("Shape of the Liturgy") a ~~re~~nt work of English scholarship--a section, poetically describing the unifying force of the Sacrament:

"Jesus said: 'This do in r@membrance of me. Was ever another command ~~so obeyed?~~ so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human circumstance, for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. Men have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom in a little country church; for the proclamation of a dogma or for a good crop of wheat; for the wisdom of the Parliament of a mighty nation, or for a sick old woman afraid to die; for a schoolboy sitting an examination, or for Columbus setting out to discover America; for the famine of whole provinces, or for the soul of a dead lover; in thankfulness because my father did not die of penumonia; for a village headman much tempted to return to fetish because the yams had failed; because

The unity, or disunity, of man is rapidly emerging as the most serious problem confronting the 20th century. When we survey the international scene we see nothing but a shambles; big nation against big nation; separate power blocks at loggerheads with each other; recalcitrant new nations playing both sides against the middle. In the past year we havewatched the ~~only~~ visible expression of unity, the U.N. come to a grinding, paralyzed ~~halt~~ stand-still. And there seems to be no relief in sight. The 20th century with all is technological blessings--its genius for communication and rapid transportation, instead of making mankind aware of a unity and oneness has seemed only to make us more alienated and separated than before.

The same thing has happened within our own nation. 100 yrs. after the civil war we find ourselves on the far side of a great gap that divides North from South. The rapid urbanization of our culture has thrown millions of people together in big cities and the resultant problems have been, to date, nearly impossible to solve.

Unity is a concept--about which we know very little--because unity simply doesn't seem to exist anywhere. Even within the Church, the forces of disunity have long been at work. In this day of the Ecumenical movement when churches are at least talking seriously about unity, it is helpful to remember that those talking are still a minority. Thus far the numerical majority of Protestants--S. Baptist, the millions of independent rural churches, even the Lutherans have abstained from any talk of unity.

And of course within each local church we have seen and experienced the forces of disunity. It seems sometimes that the church, that institution that ought to be displaying to the world a living example of the new unity of Jesus Christ, is the place where people are the most vindicative, and the most alienated from one another.

because we live together closer than ~~as it~~ people ever before did, in great urban sprawls.

Where is our lost unity? Where is that blessed fellowship into which Jesus Christ calls us? It is here; it is in our midst--we needn't bother looking elsewhere, for it is already present where Jesus Christ is present, and where Christian men gather to celebrate it by Communing together.

The unity ~~of the disciples~~ Jesus Christ brings was never so dramatically expressed as at the table in the upper room--when ~~they~~ the disciples shared a common loaf and a common cup. Never is it so near to us as when we celebrate that supper by remembering and by participating in it together.

Jesus concluded his prayer and went from the upper room to his arrest and his death. As we approach our remembrance of those events--~~we~~ as we prepare ourselves to incorporate them into our own experience, let us remember his prayer--let us remember his petition that "they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

and that its sole purpose is to provide us with inspiration, or knowledge, or information or fellowship, or whatever we happen to need. But as he concluded his last meal with the twelve upon whose shoulders the work would rest, our Lord prayed to God--that they should be consecrated to the task he began. He prayed that they would go into the world and there ~~some~~ serve, and preach and heal, and if need be, die. As we think of these words--as we prepare ourselves to commune with him and with each other, we ought to be considering our own witness. Have we, as a church, gone out--have we as individuals brought the newness we have found in Jesus Christ to bear on our world through acts of service and humble chairty? Hasour faith--sent us out with a burning zeal to display, in our lives, the goodness of the good news?

The fourth theme of our Lord's prayer has to be with us. ("I do not pray for these only but also for those who are to believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou Father, act in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.") Up to this point Jesus has been praying for the disciples. We can relate ourselves to the concerns expressed in his prayer; unity, a right relationship with the world, and an effective witness in the world. But suddenly we find ourselves personality drawn in as our Lord thought about those who would come after; "Not only these, but also for those who are to believe through their word." And what is Jesus' concern for the millions of men and whowould, in fact, believe through their word? What was his concern for us who taoday, 20 centuries later, believe because they spoke their word? Once again we return to the theme of unity--("that they may all be one--so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.") Of all the possibilities--this is what Jesus prayed for his church--not that it be strong or numerous or wealthy or successful; but they may all be one.

Jesus prayed that his disciples should be one--and they proved, as men ever since have proved, that they badly needed that prayer.

The second theme of our Lord's prayer has to do with the disciple's relationship with the world. "I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one."

Jesus knew that history was full of religions that were negative and life denying. Perhaps he knew that men of faith down through the centuries would hear his words, his ethical imperatives and seek to fulfill them by withdrawing from the world. Again his prayer touched an issue that has always bothered the church. How to accept the reality of evil--the necessity of combating and overcoming it--and remain in the midst of it, ~~has been one of the central questions down through the centuries~~. And it is a very live issue today. The monks answered by withdrawing completely from all worldliness. In their quiet monasteries, isolated from the natural interchange of communal living, they lived what they thought to be the truly righteous life. But in a very real sense they were doing precisely what Jesus prayed that his disciples would not do. John Milton had little time for what he called "cloistered virtue" but consistantly men have faith been satisfied only with virtue that is cloistered behind brick monastry walls--or a rigid wall of the mind. The Puritans answered the age kold question by living in self imposed monasticism. To be sure, they lived in the world and participated in sociey--but hated every minute of it. Their ethic demanded that they shun all pleasure--that frugality, stern discipline, and solemnity were equivalent to Godliness--and the end result was a mental monastry--again totally isolated from the reality of life.

or example given to the disciples. But in the 17th chapt. of John we find a prayer that Jesus prayed--and so its content is of particular significance for us.

The prayer can be broken down into four separate sections. There are four distinct themes that are expressed in the prayer--and I wish to discuss each one of them briefly.

The first theme has to do with the unity of the disciples. "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." To "keep them in thy name" sounds at first like one of those religious cliches that we use but rarely understand. What does it mean? Jesus' mode of address is "Holy Father"--and if this is the name in which the disciples are to be kept it indicates a rather specific relationship. In other words--"let them be thy children--be their father--and help them to sustain that blessed relationship." The Fatherhood of God has consistantly been one of the clearer images with which men have understood and described the Creator. For the Jew, with his strongly patriarchal or--father-centered culture--calling God father was a very real and immediate experience. The significance of calling God "father," however lies in the relationship it implies between men. If God is one man's father, he is also another man's father--and this, of course, makes the two men brothers. This is what Jesus meant when he prayed that the disciples be "kept in thy name that they may be one." It was a very real unity he desired for them--a oneness that would be grounded in the fatherhood of their God.

When we look back through the pages of history, to the first century, we discover that the effect the early Christians had on the world was

Of course many marriages are not successful and many more that appear to be tranquil are not. And one thing that is missing is the will to accept and forgive. Likewise thre is not a group of individuals that does not have its internal strife, its hidden animosities, its bickering and petty picking--under the surface and many times over and above the surface for all to see.

But, there is no place for this here. Let me say this as firmly as possible; all our talk about God's forgiveness--all our weekly prayers of confession are meaningless noises until we learn to forgive each other. In fact, according to Matt. parable --until we see that prayer of confession--as our confession to one another and the assurance of pardon as our forgiveness of each other--the whole ritual is itself, an offense to God.

In the Sacrament of Holy Communion both of these tehemes converge as they do no where else in the life of the Church. As we break bread and drink the cup togethr we are accepting God's provison for our forgiveness. As we commune we are accepting his love that enfolds us in spite of our offensiveness; we are reverently accepting the death of Jesus Christ--the sign and seal of our forgiveness.

But in the Presby. tradition we serve these elements to each other. The Elders serve me--I serve the Elders--and they serve you. As we do this we are expresing our communion not only with God, but through Jesus Christ, with each other. As we hand the elements to our e neighbor we are saying "I confess to you the things I have done to you and to other men." I ask God for forgiveness and I ask you too." As we receive the elements we are saying: "I accept your confession" I accept you as you are. Because God forgives me--so I forgive you."

The Churchk of Jesus Christ is the community of the forgiven: the community that exists wherever men admit their sin and accept

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as a being of absolute goodness and truth. Concurrent with this has been the accute awareness that natural man is not a being of goodness and truth--and that man's failure is an offense to God. Man's religions therefore, have been structured attempts to gain that goodness and truth and thus remove the offensiveness.

But of all the many varying expressions of man's religious anxiety one differs from all the rest. In principle the religion of the Israelites acknowledged that thre was nothing men could do to remove his offensiveness; and that any forgiveness would have to be intitiated by God. Thus the 130th Psalm: "If thou O Lord shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee." Notice I said, in principle, because Judaism did lapse into the old pattern of attempting, through various reliious laws and rituals to gain God's forgiveness. But at bottom there lingered the conviction that if "God marked iniquities no one could stand "and that man's only hope was the affirmation that "there is forgiveness with thee."

It's quite difficult to think of oneself as an offense to God. And it's even more difficult to accept the Christian doctrine that there is nothing much we can do about it. ~~But this is still the spring board of our faith and we still call our affliction sin.~~

This is because - pride keeps us from acknowledging our sin -

Our root sin is pride or self centeredness. We make ourselves into God's: we refuse to let anything replace the omnipresent "I" at the center of our worlds. Who here could deny that he is motivated by self? Who here could deny that he takes special pride in even his practice of religion? Who here has not felt the subtly of self esteem for being so generous for being so faithful to the Church; for doing an act of charity? And so, sin being pride, we readily see that there

It's terribly difficult to be specific when trying to describe an extremely subjective or personal experience. And so the N.T. doesn;t tell us we should feel - or how salvation is experienced in any but the most general terms. But it does proclaim loudly and clearly that the new creation is here: that salvation has become a possibility within a man's lifee time: and it opens the door to all who would enter.

Now having said that I want to tell you how the church has traditionaally described the new creation: or how it might answer the question: ("How does it feel to be saved?") I would start your thinking by merely pointing in three directions. First salvation means that there can be meaning to our lives. For many people this is an all-important matter. ("What significance is there to my small existence? Of what consequense am I in a life, the very largenss of which threatens to swallow my identity?") The N.T. answers that God loves you and me and every man, enough to die for us: and this I would suggest, is the deepest meaning we could ask for our lives.

Secondly salvation means a feeling of being "at home" in the world. Estrangement and alienation are the by-words of our generation. In a time of rapid social and cultural change there seems to be little to hang on to: little to give us security and confidence. And into our sense of frustration God thrusts himself in Jesus Christ inviting us to lean on him, to put our faith in him who remains eternally stable in the face of all life's intrangencies.

Finally, salvation means the peace and assurance that God's love is eternal.:- that it begins with in the confines of life and extends beyond. Deep in our subconscous is a a dread of death: as we grow older this dread becomes ever mmore conscious. But Jesus Christ is God's sign that his Love is eternal: that the love that created us continues even beyond the limitations of temporal existence.

~~Salcation does not mean life without suffering or tension or anxiety~~

mentioned earlier that every man inherently has a thirst for soemthing more, something deeper and more meaningful than life offers. This need and this search have never changed. But over the years the church has. ~~Christianity~~

Christianity is not very important to a majority of people in the world today, nor a majority of the citizens of this nation: and if attendance and giving statistics mean anything, it is not a matter of life or death to the majority of church members. And why? I think one good area in which to pursue and answer is this matter of salvation. Christianity today simply does not appear to be concerned with it: the Good News that the Kingdom of God is present is not preached, - and it is not experienced. Man's search continues, however: we still need and search for that something more we have called salvation. But more often than not organized religion has ~~g~~ailed to meet that need.

What difference does Christ make? Most people would have to answer very little: for most people think of salvation in terms of heaven, a place in the sky where good people go after death, and that's all. That Christ might make a difference here and now is simply not a viable thought for the vast majority of people today. The deep irony here is that the church is to blame. For it is the church that has put all its eggs in th basket of a heavenly reward after death. It has been organized Christianity that has torn salvation away from life and deposited it in the here-after. It has been the church that has used this pie in the sky approach as a merchantable item, when cobined with a vivid fear of hell's torment and man's selfish desire to live forever, in short, it has been the church that has destroyed the Biblical doctrine of salvation.

And so who goes to church? Present company excluded of course, those who are worried about death, those who have been taught to fear the torture of hell. Or to take the opposite approach: where does a man take his thirst for meaning in life? Where does a man go with his search for that somethign more that he knows is there but has been unable to find? Where does a man take his deepest need? Not to organized religion, for his view of the church is a crusty institution that hones in on death, while igoring man's depest need which happens to be very much in the present. Do we need any further evidence than the average

drunken debauchery of the ancient mystery religions whereby an entire community was hypnotized in a frenzied state of detachment from the orderly structure of life and the accepted system of values: and the Christian monastic, working out his salvation away from the noise, temptation and business of everyday life in the solitude of the monastery. In fact, it is fair to observe that the general consensus of mankind has been that if there is such a thing as salvation, it must be found apart form ordinary living. And so musch of man's religiousness has been an attempt to create the conditions through which life could be escaped and denied.

Related to this whole general movement is another: this one looking for salvation after life. The ancient Israelite's had a healthy sense of God's eternity: they knew that a God who had created them, a God who cared enought about them to make them a nation and reveal to them his law, was certainly not going to abandon them when they died. Men of faith have always concurred. And yet, once estanblished this doctrine of salvation after life lent itself to extreme abuse. As the historical situation worsened for the Jews, salvation or deliverance was seen more and more as soenthing that was going to happen after earthly life. So entrancing and comforting was this thought that it quickly overshadowed all other religous ideas. Life may be misreable now, but everything will be all right in the here-after. And of course, if salvation is a state of existence that begins at the point of death, and only then, it is not difficult to pooceed to the logical sequence: that salvation is a reward bestowed on those who have been particulairy good and deserving during their life time.

These are the directions man's search for salvation has taken, both within and without Christianity. In actuality, the Bible teaches somehting quite different. As usual the Old and New Testaments are amazingly consistant here, when we look beyond the peculiar variations of specific peronsialties and times. For the Israelite, salvation wa historical, that is, it commenced now, in the present. In the Old testament, salvation meant deliverance from oppression, death, slavery or hardship: it was soemthing that God did for his people that they could see and experience. God saved the people when he brought them out of Egypt and delivered them, literally, out of the hand of oppression. God save